

NCA
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BACKGROUNDER 1-0309
JOHN SCHULZ/TOKYO

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JAPAN SOCIALIST PARTY CONVENTION

ANNCR:

THIS WEEKEND, THE JAPAN SOCIALIST PARTY IS HOLDING ITS ANNUAL SPRING CONVENTION IN TOKYO. FROM TOKYO, VOA CORRESPONDENT JOHN SCHULZ HAS FILED THIS BACKGROUND REPORT ON THE MAIN ISSUES CONFRONTING THE PARTY DELEGATES:

VOICE:

SOMETIME DURING THIS YEAR, JAPAN WILL HOLD LOWER HOUSE GENERAL ELECTIONS AND THAT FACT MORE THAN ANY OTHER WILL BE AN OVER-RIDING CONSIDERATION AS THE FIVE HUNDRED OR MORE DELEGATES FROM ALL OVER JAPAN MEET IN TOKYO TO DISCUSS SOCIALIST PARTY BUSINESS. IN THIS ELECTION YEAR, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE SOCIALIST PARTY MAINTAIN A PUBLIC IMAGE OF PARTY UNITY... COMBINED WITH THE STANCE OF INDIGNATION OVER THE LOCKHEED SCANDAL NOW IMPAIRING THE IMAGE OF THE RULING LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY. BUT UNDERNEATH THE SURFACE AND UP FOR POSSIBLE DISCUSSION IN COMMITTEE MEETINGS, ARE SOME LONG-STANDING PROBLEMS WHICH DIVIDE THE PARTY INTO AT LEAST TWO DISTINC-FACCTIONS IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS... ONE ESSENTIAL PRO-PEKING AND THE OTHER ESSENTIALLY PRO-MOSCOW.

THE JAPAN SOCIALIST PARTY IS OVER THIRTY YEARS OLD NOW -- AND IS THE SECOND LARGEST IN BOTH HOUSES OF THE DIET, WITH ONE HUNDRED FOURTEEN REPRESENTATIVES CURRENTLY IN THE LOWER HOUSE AND SIXTY-TWO IN THE UPPER HOUSE. DURING THE CONVENTION THE PARTY MEMBERS ARE EXPECTED TO FOCUS CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION ON THE LOCKHEED BRIBERY SCANDAL AND ANNOUNCE POLICIES AIMED AT FIGHTING INFLATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT IN AN EFFORT TO ELIMINATE THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY NOW HELD BY THE RULING

LIBERAL DEMOCRATS IN BOTH HOUSES OF THE JAPANESE PARLIAMENT.

AT A NEWS CONFERENCE THURSDAY, PARTY CHAIRMAN TOMOMI NARITA SAID THE SOCIALISTS WILL COOPERATE WITH OTHER OPPOSITION PARTIES TO BRING DOWN THE GOVERNMENT OF LIBERAL DEMOCRAT TAKEO MIKI AND ESTABLISH A NEW ONE UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY. THE SOCIALISTS ARE THE ONLY OPPOSITION PARTY IN THE POST-WAR HISTORY OF JAPAN WHO HAVE HELD THE REIGNS OF GOVERNMENT, DURING AN EIGHT MONTH PERIOD UNDER PRIME MINISTER TETSU KATAYAMA IN NINETEEN FORTY-SEVEN. BUT THE SOCIALISTS HAVE PROBLEMS TODAY. THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS CURRENTLY HOLD MORE SEATS IN THE LOWER HOUSE THAN ALL FOUR OPPOSITION PARTIES COMBINED.

REGARDING FOREIGN POLICY, ONE FACTION WITHIN THE PARTY IS IN FAVOR OF AN IMMEDIATE PEACE TREATY WITH PEKING -- WHICH INCLUDES A CONTROVERSIAL CLAUSE CONDEMNING HEGEMONY BY SUPERPOWERS IN THE PACIFIC REGION. A SOCIALIST DELEGATION VISITING PEKING SIGNED A STATEMENT TO THAT EFFECT LAST YEAR. THE SECOND LARGEST FACTION WITHIN THE PARTY IS PRO-MOSCOW AND IT OPPOSES ANY SUCH CLAUSE IN A PEKING-TOKYO PEACE TREATY.

THERE IS GENERAL AGREEMENT WITHIN THE PARTY ON BASIC POLICIES TOWARD DOMESTIC PROBLEMS BUT SHARP DISAGREEMENT ON HOW TO IMPLEMENT THESE POLICIES -- A SPLIT THAT AGAIN DIVIDES THE TWO MAJOR FACTIONS WITHIN THE PARTY. MOREOVER, SOME PARTY MEMBERS STRONGLY OPPOSE AN ALLIANCE OF ANY FORM WITH OTHER OPPOSITION PARTIES. DESPITE ITS STRONG REPRESENTATION IN THE JAPANESE PARLIAMENT, THE SOCIALIST PARTY IS RELATIVELY

SMALL, SEVEN TIMES SMALLER THAN THE JAPANESE COMMUNIST PARTY, FOR EXAMPLE. IT DEPENDS ON THE LABOR UNIONS AND SYMPATHY VOTES FROM NON-PARTY MEMBERS TO ACHIEVE ITS COMPARATIVE ELECTION SUCCESS IN RELATION TO THE OTHER OPPOSITION PARTIES.

THE WEEKEND CONVENTION THEN, IS EXPECTED TO EMPHASIZE PARTY UNITY. NO SHAKEUPS IN THE PARTY LEADERSHIP ARE EXPECTED, BUT THE PARTY IS EXPECTED TO PRESS FOR EARLY ELECTIONS IN THE WAKE OF THE LOCKHEED SCANDAL NOW DAMAGING THE CREDIBILITY OF THE RULING LIBERAL DEMOCRATS.

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